



Aim of lesson

To show how God revealed himself to men throughout scripture.

Bible background

Genesis 1 and 18, Exodus 3,13 and 19, Hebrews 1 & 2

Preparation required

You will need pre-prepared cards or stickers with Bible references on (and maybe the text of the quotation depending upon your class), concordance(s) and the class timeline.

Outline of lesson

Read 1 Timothy 3:16 with the class and explain that this verse is telling us how God has shown himself to mankind through the ages.

You might like to look at different versions or a concordance to see that the word 'manifest' means 'to clearly show'. The word 'manifestation' comes from the same root as the word 'manifesto'. During an election a political party will produce a manifesto which is supposed(!) to tell people clearly what the party is about. The point of this lesson is to show how God has made himself 'clearly seen' in times past.

Get the students to go through the references in the first table in the students' books and fill in how God was showing himself to the people. The first five references are from books already covered in these lessons so you could ask the class for their opinions before looking up the verses.

Genesis 1	Through creation. We can see God's power in everything around us.
Genesis 18	Through angels. This is a long chapter and the class will probably know the story so just get them to concentrate on verses 1-3,22-33.
Exodus 3:1-16	Through an angel at the burning bush. The meaning of God's name.
Exodus 13:21, 14:19	Through an angel in the pillar of cloud and of fire
Exodus 19:16-25	In thunder and lightning
Hebrews 1:1	Through the prophets
Hebrews 1:2	Through the Lord Jesus

Get the class to notice that in some of these examples we are sometimes told it is the angels appearing or speaking and sometimes it is God. To all intents and purposes it is the same thing because the angel represented God, and spoke and acted with the authority of God (Exodus 23:20-21).

Hebrews 1:2 shows us that the last and most important revelation of God was through his son, the Lord Jesus. If we understand this we don't need to get worried about verses like John 20:28 and Isaiah 9:6.

Angels

Ask the class what else they know about angels, their role and examples from the Bible. They can guide, protect, deliver and destroy. Angels can perform their work unseen or, when seen, can appear in many different forms. They show God's glory.

The Greek word *aggelos*¹ means either heavenly messenger (angel) or earthly messenger (human being).

Using the references below ask the class to decide the role being performed by the angel (or angels), and then write the reference or phrase indicating the occasion under the correct heading on their chart in the workbook. You could have the Bible references written on pre-prepared cards or stickers so they can be shared out. Depending upon your class you may wish to provide them with just a few, as a starting point, and then use concordances to find other examples. There are many other examples that could be added to the chart if the class want to.

¹ *Aggelos* is commonly used of human messengers. Examples are in Mark 1:2, Luke 7:24,27 and 9:52. The same is true in the Old Testament: the Hebrew word for angel (*malak*) is used many times of human messengers – see Genesis 32:3,6; Numbers 20:14 and 21:21 for instance. This can be a source of confusion; for example, Matthew 25:41 must simply refer to men with evil motives who can therefore be regarded as the 'messengers of the devil'.

References written on stickers could be used if you want to do a class chart.

Examples:

Giving messages	Guiding	Protecting	Destroying
Genesis 18:1-2,10	Genesis 24:7	Daniel 3:25,28	2 Kings 19:35
Genesis 19:1, 12-13	Exodus 14:19	Daniel 6:22-23	Acts 12:23
Exodus 3:2, 7-10	Exodus 23:20-21	Acts 5:18-19	
Judges 6:11-24		Acts 12:6-10	
Luke 1:11-13			
Luke 1:26-27, 30-31			
Acts 8:26			

You may also want to discuss the form the angel(s) took in each reference. And this might be a good opportunity to talk about the cherubim and why angels are so often depicted with wings.

You might like to note with references to the timeline that angels have been sent at all times throughout scripture.

Us

Hebrews 13:2 is an interesting verse. Talk to the class about the possibility of them being kind to an angel. Or of being an angel themselves to others. This would only mean that they were showing God-like qualities to people around them.

2 Corinthians 3:18 and similar verses show that this isn't a silly idea and 1 Corinthians 15:28 tells us that that is the intention of God is that we will all reflect God's glory in the end.

How does Jesus reveal God to us?

The theme of 'God's character in Jesus' was covered in lesson 4, but you could usefully revise the points made in that lesson - or go through them in more detail if the lesson hasn't been covered.

Relevance to our lives

Through the idea of God being in his angels, in Jesus and eventually in us we can see how God fulfils his purpose. Although the evidence may not be as obvious today, we can still be sure that the angels are working to fulfil God's purpose to fill the earth with his glory.

When David was in trouble he wrote: 'The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them' (Psalm 34:7).

You may like to discuss the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:10 - 'See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.'

Extension activities

The students might particularly like to think about how angels helped Jesus (for example, Matthew 4:11, 26:53). They might like to develop the idea of how angels work today and what they will do in the future (Matthew 13:41,49; 16:27; 24:31).